JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

YEC '07 fills Miss. College coliseum

NCE 1877 17, 2008 OL. 132 No. 3

By William H. Perkins Jr. Editor

More than 2,000 students filled A.E. Wood Coliseum on the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton on December 27-28 for the

December 27-28 for the 2007 Mississippi Baptist Youth Evangelism Challenge (YEC).

"All of the sessions were

"All of the sessions were dynamite," said Shannon Slover, YEC coordinator and youth minister at First Church, Laurel.

Gary Permenter, founder of Gary Permenter Ministries in Columbus, and James Tealey, currently living in Nashville while working on a development deal with Universal Music Publishing, were the featured speakers. Jason Elam, worship pastor at Pinelake Church in Brandon, lead

worship and praise.

Marc Eckel, founder of Splat Experience in Claypool, In., painted a breathtaking rendition of the face of Jesus using only his hands.

"Jason Elam and the band led us to the throne of grace with music every session. Gary Permenter gave an excellent challenge to the youth to kick us off. Gary always does a great job and we are honored to have him at YEC.

"Marc Eckel at splatexperience.com has a fantastic ministry that preaches the Gospel to a visual generation. The 'splats' were very moving. After the session a huge crowd came down to the stage to take pictures and get a closer look at the painting. I heard the phrase, "That was awesome,' several times." Slover said.

"James Tealy is a gifted speaker and musician. He

preached the word of God without compromise. What stuck with me was his personal story of how Katrina affected his family and challenging the audience to read and study God's Word. He said it's like 'putting your ear to the mouth of God,'" Slover said. "Matt Spradlin, student minister at First Church,

"Matt Spradlin, student minister at First Church, Soso; Eric Bean, student minister at First Church, Purvis; Coleman Nichols, student minister at First Church, Sumrall; Gary Permenter; and J. D. Simpson of First Priority-Hub City Network in Hattiesburg taught our breakout sessions," Slover said.

"Gary and James connected with the students, and Jason's music led to a great worship experience at every session. We had a great lineup," said Don Lum, director of evangelism at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB).

FACE OF JESUS — Marc Eckel of Claypool, In., bows before his freehand painting of the face of Jesus on Dec. 27 at the 2007 Mississippi Baptist Youth Evangelism Challenge at Mississippi College in Clinton. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

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PRAISING GOD — Jason Elam (top photo), worship pastor at Pinelake Church, Brandon, sings and Gary Permenter (bottom photo), founder of Gary Permenter Ministries in Columbus, speaks on Dec. 27 at the 2007 Mississippi Baptist Youth Evangelism Challenge in A.E. Wood Coliseum on the campus of Mississippi College in Clinton. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

"I was so impressed with the students who came this year, and I am grateful to the adult leaders who took time to bring their students to YEC," he added.

Slover had a long list of people to whom he wished to express

Slover had a long list of people to whom he wished to express appreciation for the contributions to the 2007 YEC, including Jim Turcotte and Mississippi College for hosting; J.D. Simpson for creating curriculum; the breakout session leaders; Lum; and Ken Hall of the MBCB Discipleship and Family Ministry Department.

The 2007 YEC planning committee was composed of Jon Cooper, student minister at Highland Church, Laurel; Jon Kittrell, pastor of Maybank Church, Hattiesburg; and Smokey Gibson, student minister at First Church, Biloxi.

The 2008 YEC will be held at Mississippi College on December 29-

The 2008 YEC will be held at Mississippi College on December 29-30. For more information, contact the MBCB Evangelism Dept. at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3278 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 278. E-mail: jellis@mbcb.org.



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Send news, communication, and address changes to: The Editor, BAPTIST RECORD, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

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> **VOLUME 132 • NUMBER 3** (ISSN-0005-5778)

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$9.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans vailable for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist Papers. Deadlines: News items - one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.

Dear Legislator ...

The 2008 session of the Mississippi Legislature is revving up to full speed, as proposed legislation moves to committees and will soon be coming up on a series of deadlines.

As anyone knows who even casually tracks the annual three-month sessions of the Legislature, many bills are introduced but rel-atively few make it into law. The complex set of checks and balances both inside the legislative process and in the broader branches

of state government have a tendency to winnow the hundreds and hundreds of bills that are filed and

pre-filed for each session.

Legislators have to absorb their share of criticism, cynicism, and caricature during their time under the hoary domes of the New Capitol in downtown Jackson. Some of the ridicule showered on them is likely deserved (by some of them, anyway), but a fair amount is not deserved. They are, after all, our fellow

Mississippians. For every citizen who couldn't find their way to either chamber in the Capitol but feels free to regularly slam legislators, there are at least a few of us who realize that most legislators

are well-meaning people who must put aside their families, businesses, and community activities for one-quarter of each year to come to Jackson for the session.

That's no small sacrifice, so it would behoove us to occasionally tell them how much we appreciate the effort even as we loudly complain about what we

perceive they are doing or not doing.

The Mississippi Baptist Christian Action
Commission (CAC) has some helpful hints
on how to make contact with legislators, how to get a point across without dooming favored legislation, and how to follow up on the progress of important measures:

 The best communicating is done faceto-face. Make an appointment and be on time. Bring an outline of the one or two main issues you want to discuss. Be brief, recommend specific solutions, and leave a

written summary of your important points.

It's fair to ask the legislator for his/her position on the bills in which you are interested. Don't take it personally if the legis-lator disagrees. Rather than argue, discuss

differences in a pleasant manner.

• If a personal visit is not possible, write your legislator. Writing can save a legislator's time (a plus in your favor) and provides a record of your position on proposed legislation. Include your full name, address, and telephone number. The address for legislators while in session is P.O. Box 1018, Jackson, MS 39215-1018.

Individual e-mail addresses can be accessed at www.ls.state.ms.us.

• Do your research. Know the bills about which you are writing, and include any specific information you have such as the bill number and details. Bill status can be attained by calling (601) 359-3719 while the legislature is in session, or by going to www.ls.state.ms.us.

 Telephone calls do not substitute for personal visits and letters. When telephoning legislators, however, make effi-cient use of your time with them. Identify yourself and the bills you are for or against (again, one or two main issues is a good limit). Explain your reasoning and let them know how you want them to vote.

The telephone number for legislators while they are in session is (601) 359-3770. Just as with personal visits and letters, end the conversation by expressing your thanks for their time.

· Citizens can request to testify before committees about bills they strongly support or oppose. Find out the name of the appropriate committee chair-man and contact him as soon as possible.



If given the opportunity to testify, get to the point quickly and be prepared to answer any questions legislators may have about your position.

The CAC, a ministry funded by the Mississippi Cooperative Program, stands ready to assist Mississippi Baptists who want to get involved in this grand process of self-governance we enjoy in our state and nation. They can be reached at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3329 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651 toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 329. Fax: (601) 292-3350. E-mail: rwood@christianaction.com.

Take the time to get involved, or else just be content with whatever comes out of the legislative pipeline. Those are really our only two choices.

s we begin a new calen-dar year and prepare to observe Sanctity of Human Life Sunday on January 20, let us be thankful for God's blessing of human life!

The pinnacle of God's creation on earth was the human species, formed by His hands, made in His image, and filled with His breath of life (Gn. 1:26-31). The most important things to each of us are the loved ones God has placed in

our lives. Life is so precious! On the northwest corner of our Mississippi Baptist Building in Jackson, a Memorial to the Missing has been con-structed to house 50 million pennies to remind us of each of the 50 million aborted children innocent lives — since the U.S. Supreme Court decision Roe vs. Wade in 1973. Five in this 5-4 split decision legalized abortion throughout our nation, stepping over individual states' right to decide.

This came about from a very small percentage of the popula-tion lobbying for this legaliza-tion with many half-truths exploited, stepping into many emotional/psychological unknowns, and declaring an infant in the mother's womb was not actual human life until

birth (Ps. 139:14).

This action began a large step away from God, our Christian heritage, and the

GUEST OPINION:



Our disrespect for human life

By Carl Myers, missions director Pearl River Associaton

acknowledgement of the sanctity of every human life. Almighty God is not pleased! Look at the regression in our culture in the U.S. over the last three decades — early term abortions to partial birth abortion; euthanasia of senior adults; assisted suicide of critically ill patients; no respect for another person's life; shoot-ings of school children or youth at school just because an individual is not liked or wants to be considered famous; even shooting innocent strangers at a shopping mall before committing suicide or being killed by police. The progression of sinful-

ness comes at a price. The claim began with, "It is the mother's choice," with no thought of the consequences. (Nu. 14:18).

Standing before the Memorial to the Missing is an overwhelming experience, to see the now 47 million pennies

with space waiting for the additional three million pennies to be given. A penny, like a baby, seems to be so small and sometimes of very little worth, but when seen in a collection of 50 million it becomes enormous.

The mind wonders. What color were her eyes? How tall would he be? What would their sonality be? What great talents would he have? What great contribution to my world would she have given? What cure would he have discovered? Where would she have gone to tell the story of God's love? Would he have been a great preacher of God's Good News?

There are emotional scars for the mothers/fathers — the fear, loneliness, sense of separation from God, guilt, how to receive forgiveness.

How have we as a nation responded in the past when attacked by another nation? When Pearl Harbor in Hawaii

was attacked December 7, 1941, 2,388 U.S. citizens died and 1,178 were wounded. The response? War! The September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington D.C., cost 3,000 U.S. citizens their lives The response? War! lives. The response? War!

Yet we have allowed over 4,151 children each day for the past 33 years to be aborted in our country. Our response? Silence! While some speak of pro-choice, these babies had no choice.

A proclaimed right some demanded, a movement lead, a court battle won, and 50 Million citizens are now missing over three decades. We are a nation guilty of shedding innocent blood (Mt. 27:24-25), yet we proclaim, "God Bless America!" One might ask why He should. Fifty million missing never had a choice, no opportunity to live God's gift of human life.

How to respond? Repent as a nation, pray for law change, pray for hurting mothers/fathers, do not be silent, and speak for those fifty million missing voices.

For more information on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday and the Memorial to the Missing, contact the Mississippi Baptist Christian Action Commission at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3329 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 329. Email: rwood@christianaction.com.

Americans believe God at work in China

BEIJING, China (BP) — The sign at the park's entrance said much. It was the social contract for Beijing. It admonished the Chinese to cherish the young and to show respect for the elderly, to work well and hard, to live in harmony with all, and to be broad-minded and open-minded.

and open-minded.

With 18.2 million people crowding the city, Beijing's 500 parks are filled daily with people who are approachable.

Early in the morning, groups gather for Tai Chi, muscle-strengthening exercises tied to the martial arts. They also gather to play sports and musical instruments, to walk, think, and engage each other in conversation.

Scores of people visit the parks to escape the busyness of the city. The beautiful, intentionally-landscaped parks are a great contrast to the bustling city streets, which congest the air with stifling smog.

The smog also is due to an overabundance of industry,

The smog also is due to an overabundance of industry, especially active now in preparation for the 2008 Olympics to be held in Beijing in August.

be held in Beijing in August.

Modern buildings overwhelm the city's hutongs,
where for centuries communities gathered together. All over
the city's landscape, new buildings are being built, new subway lines developed, and people everywhere are preparing to
be in the world's limelight.

Underlying it all is a sense of God's movement, an underground growing interest in spiritual matters. For years, the communist government forbade any expression of faith but there is a sense that God is at work, even as foreigners are given the opportunity to gather.

Passport-carrying foreigners may freely worship together in closely monitored worship services. Despite the surveillance, there is a collective sigh of relief as foreign Christians gather to take off their masks, worship the True God, and pour out their hearts freely for an hour a week.

In these services, the presence of the Lord is palatable. There

appear to be no complacent Christians. These Christians understand what it means to offer their lives sacrificially in an environment where they may be forced to leave if they are found proselytizing local residents. They know the difficulty of reaching people who for years were not allowed to pursue matters of the faith and who fear losing their own lives if they do.

Yet, the foreign Christians gather to celebrate the growing population of Chinese Christians. They marvel at the way they experience God moving in the nation.

One Christian, unnamed for

One Christian, unnamed for security reasons, explained with tears in her eyes, "It is the greatest feeling to explain to a new believer, "There are millions of Christian brothers and sisters in your new family. They are all over this city."

Among the Christians in China, there is a deep faith, an exhilarating, purposeful relationship with God and His church. Though exciting, the experience saddened the American ministry leaders who visited.

"I don't want to bring the American church here," a pastor from the United States said, expressing concern about bringing the Western version of Christianity to China. "The Jesus I experience here, I want to bring to America."

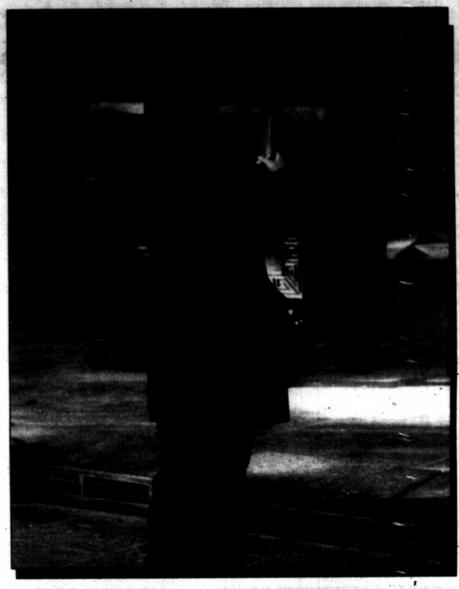
He explained, "I get to go home to be on staff of a church of apathetic believers who don't want to be with lost people."

Understanding his concern, an unnamed Christian man who now lives in Beijing said his decision to move to China was crucial. "I remember asking myself," Do I want to spend the rest of my good working years doing the same Bible studies or do I want to live as the disciples did?"

Though he had a successful

Though he had a successful business in America, he and his wife opted to move in order to live out their motto: "Making an eternal difference in the hearts of others."

They have the opportunity every day to make such a difference.



MISPLACED FAITH — A young woman worships at one of several Buddhist temples now permitted in Beijing. Many students go to the temples to pray for success in their circumstances. (BP photo)

A Christian American leader who visited them in Beijing pondered why he should bring Western Christians to China. "If I have someone unwilling to do something in their Jerusalem [their local context based on the Acts 1:8 model], why would I want to take them to the end of the earth?" he asked with great concern.

"Because foreign missions is a catalyst for your Judea and Samaria," the Beijing worker replied, explaining that teams who minister in China come back to America with great excitement, ultimately rejuvenating their local church ministries.

Another Christian American

leader agreed, encouraging the Americans to bring teams to Asia where God is at work.

"God calls and challenges us to join with Him in His work," he said. "Because He is truly at work here, there are great opportunities for your church members... As they come and serve here, they cannot flee from God anymore.

"They cannot be complacent anymore. Let God use them as His instrument. Where there's the greatest darkness, there's the potential for the greatest light. Give people the courage and the faith to join with Him and say, 'I will walk with you, Father.'

"It will be wonderful," he said.

BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

PUBLISHED SINCE 1877

JANUARY 17, 2008 Vol. 132 No. 3

Christians killed

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Hindu extremists in India's Orissa state killed six Christians, burned 400 homes, and destroyed 60 church buildings during the Christmas holy days, according to a report from the All India Christian Council. An estimated 600 Christians took refuge in a church building after extremists tried to attack their village. "Young and healthy Christians have left their villages to flee for their lives. Children, women, [the] old and sick, who could not flee for their lives, are in great danger," John Dayal, the council's secretary general, told International Christian Concern, a human rights group based in Washington, D.C. "Remnants are starving for the last four days, and sick are suffering without medical attention." Christians are being forced to convert to Hinduism in order to get food, medical attention, and shelter, Dayal said. Although India's constitution guarantees freedom of religion, Hindu nationalists often persecute the country's Muslim and Christian minorities, especially if they believe efforts are being made to persuade tribal minorities to change their religion. Orissa state requires people to obtain police permission before changing their religion. Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons were martyred in Orissa in 1999, burned alive in their automobile.

Looking back

10 years ago

The Mississippi Baptist Convention Board donates a 1991 Ford passenger van, previously used by the board's ministry departments, to the Colorado Baptist General Convention for use in local church ministries in that state.

20 years ago

Graham Smith, associate pastor and minister of music at Morrison Heights Church in Clinton, is chosen to lead the Church Music Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. The Gulfport native succeeds the late Dan Hall.

50 years ago

Longtime Mississippi Baptist pastor L. Gordon Sansing begins work as secretary of the newly-formed Department of Cooperative Missions at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in Jackson.



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

- 1: Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
- 2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
- 3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.
 (I believe in Jesus.)
- 4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

MS Positions

salem Baptist Church, Marshall county, Miss., seeking part-time youth director with potential for growth. Please send resume to youth director search committee, P.O. Box 734, Potts

RAYMOND ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH, Jackson, is seeking a part-time minister of children. For more information or to submit a resume, please call (601) 372-6154 or email pastor Jonathan Russell at jrussell@raymondroad.com.



PROVERBS I HAVE HEARD

I love the Book of Proverbs and its wise, practical, and pithy sayings of an ancient king. Solomon viewed life through the eyes of God and was able to communicate to us incredible wisdom in these Proverbs. From childhood on, I have read and studied the Proverbs. With amazing brevity, the Proverbs bring the mind of God and the matters of earth together. One of the meaningful exercises that can bless you day after day is reading the chapters of Proverbs according to the days of the month. Since there are 31 chap-ters in Proverbs, there will always be a chapter for each day and in the months that have less than 31 days you can double up and be blessed. On this monthly cycle I have read, read, and reread the Proverbs. Amazingly, I have found new truths repeat-edly and, more importantly, the truths of God's Word have found their way into the daily. experiences I may be facing. I have discovered some modern proverbs. No, they are not of biblical proportions, but you might find them interesting and even helpful. For those dieters who may

For those dieters who may be out there, and I suppose at some time or other that includes all of us, I ran across this thought provoking idea. "Nothing tastes as good as the feeling of being thin." I have



Directi ns

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

absolutely no memory of ever being thin, but I can imagine that it is a good thing. While I may have missed out on a few genetic traits that my parents had, the one thing of which I got the full measure was the totality of all of the fat genes from both sides of my parentage. I try to exercise, eat healthy food most of the time, and think about this thought provoking little proverb while I am contemplating eating dessert.

The second little proverb I

would pass along to you says, "Leap and the net will appear." I first saw this little phrase in a story about a lady who was thinking about beginning a business. She wanted to, she believed she could, but she was unsure and even afraid to move forward. She took a leap and the success story of her multimillion dollar company unfolded. For those of us who know the Lord and trust the Word of God, the leaping in life has to do with following God's will. It is following His will based on

the truth of His Word and the leading of His spirit. It is trusting God that when you do the right thing and follow His pur-pose and plan He will provide for you. He will take care of you, and He will be the net. It is not unusual to find those of us who are believers acting in unbelieving ways. It is not unusual for us to know the Lord Jesus as our Savior and trust Him forever and ever and at the same time experience those times of hesitancy in our faith. You can know God is leading and not want to leap. It is important to go ahead with Him or you will miss Him, miss what He is doing in your life, and miss the blessings that He

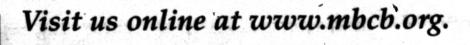
has ahead for you.

One final proverbial thought says, "Don't make fun of the alligator until you have crossed the river." Even then, it may not be the smartest thing to make fun of the alligator because you may need to come back. I suppose that this is just another way of saying do not

treat people unkindly or in a demeaning fashion because later you may have to deal with them again and they may treat you the same way or worse. It is the restatement of the old cliche' that says, "Be kind to people as you climb the ladder of success. You may meet them again as you come back down." Remember Joseph's brothers who sold him into slavery and then years later they unknowingly stood before him during the famine asking for a supply of food. Life always seems to have some interesting and revealing twists and turns.

Jesus' instructions that have become known as the Golden Rule always seem to fit in every stage or circumstance of life. "Do unto others as you would have them to do unto you" (Luke 6:31). It is never right to do folks wrong, and it is never wrong to do folks right. In our world where it seems like you must be on guard constantly and be looking in every direction for someone who is ready to take advantage of you, we may feel we have a license to make an exception and treat others wrongfully on the journey of life. It rarely if ever works out to an ultimate, positive ending. On the other hand doing right ultimately ends right.

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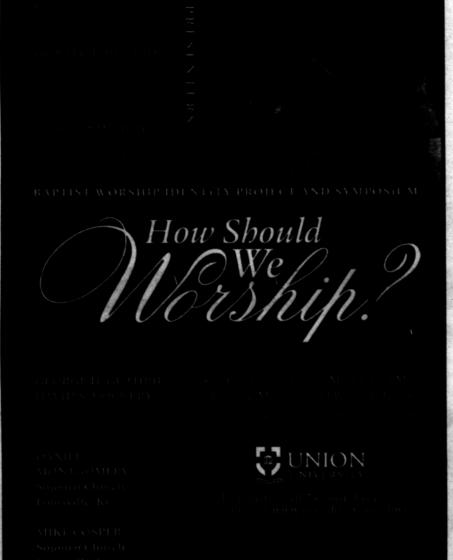


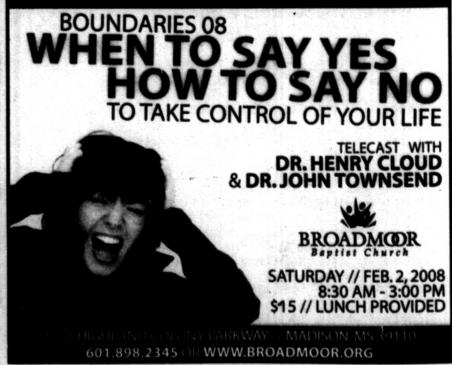
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THE BAPTIST RECORD

JANUARY 17, 2008

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CHRISTIAN CHILDREN'S HOME seeking Christian House parents for boys home located in Northwest Alabama. For more information, please call (256) 356-8900 or (256) 810-4908.

Bi-annual compensation survey opens; participation encouraged

DALLAS (Special) — The 2008 Compensation Survey for Southern Baptist churches, provided through the joint efforts of Baptist state conventions, LifeWay Christian Resources, and GuideStone Financial Resources, is now available online at www.LifeWay.com/compensationsurvey.

All ministers and employees of Southern Baptist churches are encouraged to participate. Answers to the online survey are kept confidential and are not reported individually. The survey takes, on average, less than 10 minutes to complete. In addition to salary and benefit information, participants salary and benefit information, participants in the survey will need to have available their church's average weekly worship or Bible study attendance, resident membership and annual budget.

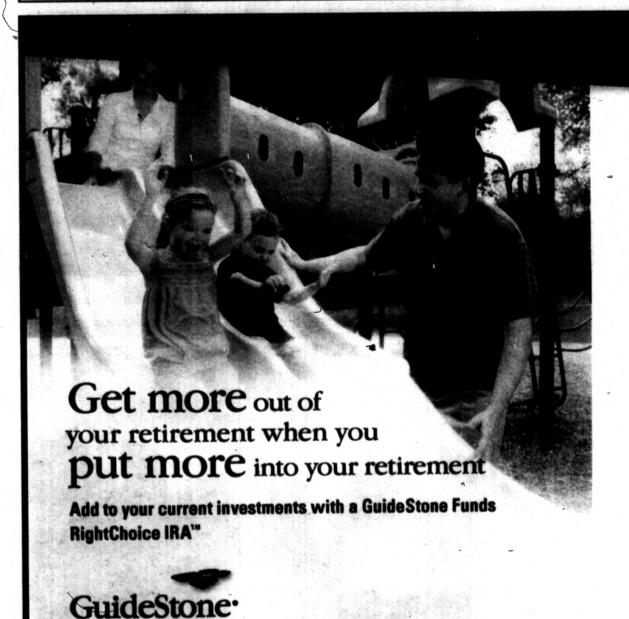
LifeWay and GuideStone are pooling resources to provide the online survey, compile the data, and make available an online reporting tool for years to access results. The survey

ing tool for users to access results. The survey is available through mid-April and results will be released in time for the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in June.

For more than a decade, GuideStone has teamed with Baptist state conventions to survey Southern Baptist churches concerning their compensation of ministers and church employees. Every state convention participated in the last bi-annual study in 2006, which included results from more than 7,000 churches and 17,000 individuals.

Through the survey, church administrators, personnel and finance committees, and minister search teams have access to an accurate baseline by which they can compare their own church's salary and benefits

with similar churches across the country. Southern Baptist church ministers and employees may complete the survey through the April 15 deadline. For staff at churches without Internet access, contact Carol Taylor or Robin Nichols in the Church-Minister Relations Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3227 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 227. E-mail: ctaylor@mbcb.org.



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Choose well. Choose right:

JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Deacon Ordination, First Church, Terry



2. Parade, Carrollton Church, Carrollton



3. Retirement reception, Remus Church, Leake County



4. Lottie "Moon Pie" winners, West Salem Church, Greege



BAPTISTS

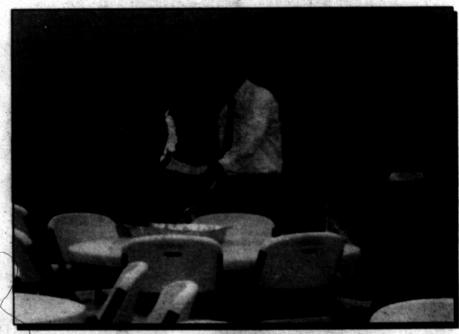
- First Church, Terry, recently ordained three new deacons. Pictured (from left) are Pastor John Pace, Scott Slay, Jonathan Sherwin, and Bruce Hennington.
- ton, began the celebration of the church's 175th anniversary with a float in the Carrollton Christmas Parade. Along with the choir and children singing Christmas carols, the float carried a miniaturized replica of the church building. The church will celebrate the anniversary throughout the year, with a special service scheduled for August 24, the actual day of the church's birth.
- 3. Remus Church, Leake County, recently hosted a retirement' reception for deacons Devon Pope and Doy Lee Powers. Shown are Pope, Edwina Pope, Sue Powers, and Powers.
- 4. West Salem Church,
 Greene, held a Lottie "Moon
 Pie" contest and auction as a
 part of 2007's offering. The
 winner was crowned "Big
 Lottie 2007" Shown are
 Nancy Freeman, Bernice
 Byrd, Alex Brewer, and Betty
 Blue. The auction raised
 \$585 for the Lottie Moon
 Christmas Offering.
- The GAs of Williamsville Church, Kosciusko, recently earned their badges for the foreign mission study of Moldova. Shown are the participants.
- First Church, Fannin, broke ground on a new 26,300 square foot educational building and fellowship hall recently. Ron Bird, pastor.
- Southway Church, Brookhaven, recently burned the note on their fellowship hall after five years. Shown are pastor Richard Balkcom, Chad Walker, and Jerry Holmes.
- First Church, Pittsboro, recently ordained Van Russell and Mike Sanders as deacons. Shown are Russell, Sanders, and pastor Steve Maughan.



5. GAs, Williamsville Church, Kosciusko



6. Groundbreaking, First Church, Fannin



7. Noteburning, Southway Church, Brookhaven



8. Deacon Ordination, First Church, Pittsboro

JUST FOR THE RECORD



9. Senior adult art classes, First Church, Greenville



10 wMu craft Lottie Moop quilt, New Home Church, Fulton



11. Christmas play, Richmond Church, Tupelo



12. GAs and mothers, Freeny Church, Carthage

- Retired art teacher Iris Mitchell, First Church, Greenville, teaches art to senior adult ladies in the church and community. Her students meet to paint during the senior adult time Thursday mornings at the church. Shown are some of the participants.
- 10. The wMu of New Home Church, Fulton, raised \$629.30 by each participant crafting a square for their Lottie Moon Christmas Offering quilt. The church more than doubled its \$500 offering goal by raising \$7254.30. Michael Warren, pastor.
- 11. The K-4 children of Richmond Church, Tupelo, presented their Christmas play Dec. 16. Shown are the participants.
- 12. The Girls in Action (GA) group from Freeny Church, Carthage, attended the recent Mother/Daughter Weekend at Camp Garaywa in Clinton.
- 13. All members of the Lightning Patrol of Troop 8, Boy Scouts of America, sponsored by First Church, Jackson, have earned the Eagle Rank, the highest rank conferred by the Boy Scouts of America organization. Nationally, only two percent of all scouts achieve Eagle Rank. Since its charter in 1921, Troop 8 has awarded over 500 Eagle Ranks.
- 14. The children's group from First Church, Potts Camp, brought Christmas cheer to the residents of Trinity Missions Health and Rehabilitation Center, singing Christmas carols and handing out candy canes and Christmas cards.
- 15. Center Terrace Church, Canton, recently held Susie Lambert Day in recognition of her 50-plus years teaching children in Sunday School. On hand were (from left) Danny Berry, pastor; Susie Lambert, Mr. and Mrs. Coot Lambert, and John Moore, worship leader.
- 16. The Woman's Missionary Union of Golden Triangle Association will sponsor A Visit with Wanda Lee on April 1, from 10 a.m.-8:30 p.m. Lee is executive director of the national Woman's Missionary Union auxiliary of the Southern Baptist Convention. Lunch will be provided at no charge, but RSVP will be appreciated: pbelcher@cableone.net, or (662) 328-7302.



13. Lightning Patrol of Boy Scouts Troop 8, First Church, Jackson



14. Children's group, First Church, Potts Camp



15. Susie Lambert Day, Center Terrace Church, Canton

- 17. Mt. Carmel Church, Carthage, will host the Celebration Choir of Leesburg Church for a "Gaither-style" homecoming concert on January 19th at 6 p.m. For more information, call (601) 267-5717. Keith Fulton, pastor.
- 18. Calvary Church, Pascagoula, ordained Bobby Hinger (right) on December 23 to serve as deacon. Pictured with him is Pastor Chris Carter.



18. Carter and Hinger, Calvary Church, Pascagoula

panetral and areas

Bibliocipher

By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004 copyrighted 2005

S RPTE ASJI OTYXH, TPP EVSEPV; HOSIG JYGS LSX DNGO GOV FSNRV SW GINJZEO.

EHTPZH WSIGA-

HVFVY: SYV

Clue: V = E

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: John Ten: Twenty-Eight.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



19. Operation Christmas Child, Parkway Church, Kosciusko

- Parkway Church, Kosci-usko, recently held a packing party for Operation Christmas Child. A total of 191 boxes were packed with items collected through the year. Don Cook, pastor.
- James T. Dunnam of State Line celebrated 60 years as a Southern Baptist minister on January 11. A graduate of Mississippi College and New Orleans Seminary, he was ordained at the age of 18 by Calvary Church, Pascagoula. In 2001, he and wife Betty Sue retired after 44 years of ministry in Florida and returned to his native Greene County

where he serves as an interim pastor and is available for supply preaching. He can be contacted at 12833 Old Avera Road, State Line, MS 39362. Telephone: (601) 848-6158.





1. Upchurch and family

- Robinwood Church, Saucier, has called Terry Upchurch as senior pastor. He is a graduate of New Orleans Seminary, and he and his wife Missy have two children, William and Rebecca.
- 2. Charles Ball has been called as the new minister of music at Tylertown Church, Tylertown.



2. Ball

Real Evangelism Conf. slated for Jan. 30-Feb. 1

CORINTH (Special) — Wheeler Grove Church, Corinth, will host a Real Evangelism Conference in cooperation with the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board on January 30-

The January 30 session will begin at 6:30 p.m. The January 31 and February 1 sessions will begin at 10 a.m., 1:45 p.m., and 6:30 p.m.

"This is not just for preachers or just for men. It's for everybody" said Kara Blackard, Wheeler Grove's pastor. "This one promises to be one of the best conferences in the country with some of America's most gifted preachers and singers on the program. Every session will be full of excitement and encour-

agement.
"This conference is very similar to those held in Jacksonville, Fl., and other places, with some major differences. This one is at no cost to all who. attend. There is no registration fee, no charge for full-course meals, and arrangements have even been made for free lodging, at a nearby retreat (men only), for the first 50 who call."

Joining Blackard on the program as

speakers will be:

 Steve Russell, a retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel. While serving in Iraq, his unit was instrumental in the capture of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein. Russell is the founder and chairman of Vets for Victory, an organi-

zation that educates the public about the war or or rror.

- Bailey Smith, evangelist from Atlanta and former two-term president of the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Bill Stafford, evangelist from Chattanooga, Tn.
- Steve Hale, evangelist from~ Woodstock, Ga.
- Junior Hill, evangelist from Hartselle, Al., and former first vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Road Church, New Orleans, and for-mer second vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Rick Stanley, evangelist from Niceville, Fl., and Elvis Presley's step-
- Jerry Spencer, evangelist from Gatlinburg, Tn., and former second vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Herb Reavis, pastor of North Jacksonville Church, Jacksonville, Fl.
- Bill Sturm, staff evangelist at Morningside Church, Valdosta Ga.

• Jamey Ragle, president of Life Building Ministries in Ponder, Ga.

Worship leadership will include:

- The Mike Speck Trio of Lebanon,
 Th. The trio consists of Mike Speck, his wife Faye, and attorney Stacie Caraway of Chattanooga.
- Greater Vision of Morristown, Tn., consisting of Rodney Griffin, Gerald Wolfe, and Jason Waldroup.
- Gold City Quartet of Gadsden, Al., consisting of Aaron McCune, Daniel Riley, Jonathan Wilburn, Steve Ladd, and Josh Simpson (piano).

A Women's Seminar entitled, "Hiding, or Hidden?" will also be held at the church in conjunction with the conference, from 1:30-4 p.m. Lynda Wall of Corinth will return as the featured speaker.

Lunch and dinner meals on January 31 and February 1 will be provided at no cost Arrangements have also been

no cost. Arrangements have also been made for free lodging (men only) for the first 50 respondents who call.

For more information and to inquire about the free lodging, contact the church at (662) 287-2764, (662) 287-2864, or (662) 287-1664. E-mail: office@wheelergrovebaptist.com. Web site: www.wheelergrovebaptist.com.

Bivos, small church pastors

to meet

Pastor/Leadership Development Department of Mississippi **Baptist** Convention Board will host a luncheon for bivocational and small church pastors and their wives on January 21 during the 2008 Mississippi Baptist State Evangelism Conference at Emmanuel Church in Grenada. The luncheon will be held at the Western Sizzlin restaurant in Grenada, beginning at 11:45 a.m. There is no cost to participants and reservations are not required. For more information, contact Dale Holloway at (601) 845-2107. E-mail: bivoldr@aol.com.

New Orleans Seminary offers courses in Mississippi

JACKSON (Special) — January 21 begins Reading Music: Rhythm/Pitch, the third of eight courses at eight locations in Mississippi sponsored by New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS) and the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

The other seven courses are:

- Song Leading.
 Worship Planning.
 Reading Music: Harmony/Melody.
- Hymnology.
- Music Administration/Staff Relations.
- Survey of Music Resources.
- Class Voice.

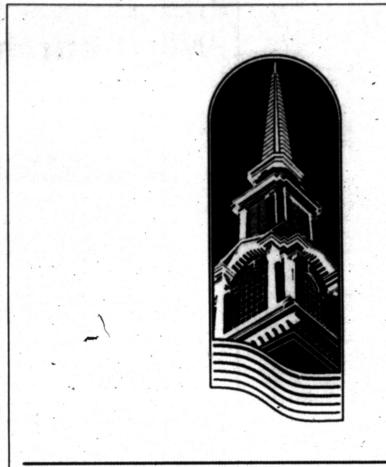
These courses are designed to pro-vide basic training for bivocational music directors and other music leaders in churches. The eight courses meet two hours per week. Each course is eight weeks in length.

The cycle of courses is scheduled over a two-year period. Each course is independent and has no prerequisite. Each student who completes the eight courses earns a Church Music Certificate from New Orleans Seminary plus a credit of eight hours toward an on campus degree program.

There is a one-time registration fee of \$25.00. The cost of each course is \$135.00. A \$60.00 scholarship is available for all first-time students. Students already enrolled are not eli-gible for the scholarship, and the grant

is limited to one person per church.

The third course, Reading Music:
Rhythm/Pitch, will meet once a week for two hours for eight consecutive weeks at the following locations and times:



NEW ORLEANS BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

- Broadmoor Church, Madison beginning January 21 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). Jimmy McCaleb, teacher, (601) 924-1233.
- First Baptist Church, Booneville beginning January 22 (7-9 p.m.).
 LuAnne Ford, teacher, (662) 728-6272.
- Northcrest Church, Meridian beginning January 14 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). Buddy McElroy, teacher, (601) 681-6615, (601) 679-1887.
- North Greenwood Church, Greenwood beginning January 22 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). Tommy Smith, teacher, (662) 453-2801. Barry Bouchillon, assistant teacher, (662) 453-5935.
- First Church, Louisville beginning January 19 (8:00 a.m.-noon). Billy Bowie, teacher, (662) 773-6246.
- Easthaven Church, Brookhaven beginning January 21 (7-9 p.m.). Mark Hamilton, teacher, (601) 894-5848.
- Tri-County Association Office, Columbia — beginning January 22 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). Brad Day, teacher, (601) 297-9699.
- Grace Memorial Church, Gulfport beginning January 21 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). Anthony Turner, teacher, (228) 863-5096.

The teachers at the respective locations can be contacted for more information, or interested parties can contact Jimmy McCaleb, Church Music Department, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3273 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 273. Email: imccaleb@mbcb.org.

Analysis: Evidence for Mormonism challenges followers

Fifth in a series

By Mike Licona Correspondent



Licona

So, what evidence is there that Mormonism is true? While Mormon scholars admit valid challenges to Mormonism from archaeology and the Book of Abraham

Abraham, they say the evidences of Mormonism's truthfulness are the Book of Mormon itself, God's confirmation in your spirit, and the number of changed lives.

When talking to Mormons expect to hear them say, "I know the Book of Mormon is true because I have prayed to God and asked him to tell me if it is true. And he has confirmed it in my spirit that it is."

In 'other words, "We don't need evidence. God has told me that the Book of Mormon is true. He has confirmed it in my spirit so that no amount of evidence against Mormonism would con-

vince me that it is wrong."

Mormon missionaries are trained to keep on telling you

how the Holy Spirit has confirmed to them that the Book of Mormon is true, that Jesus has changed their life and has meant so much to them. Expect it and do not let it surprise you. We have now come to the heart of the matter in talking with Mormons: the insufficiency of these evidences provided by Mormons for Mormonism's truth.

Feelings are often inaccurate.

Have you ever doubted your salvation? Many have, at some time. However, your feelings do not change the fact that either you are or are not saved. Can you imagine God requiring a new conversion every time you have a mood swing which results in doubts? It is possible for someone to have doubts about being a Christian, and still be one. Likewise, it is possible for someone to feel confident that they are okay in their relationship with God, but in reality are not (see Mt. 7:21-22).

People of other religions claim a confirmation from within themselves as evidence that their religion is true. Islam makes the same claims and yet Mormons do not regard the Koran or Islamic doctrine as being divinely inspired. Mohammed made claims of visions similar to Joseph Smith's.

Mormons are not the only ones to err on this point. Many Christians, myself included, have been guilty at some point of presenting feelings and spiritual experience as evidence that their beliefs are true. The only way to determine the true source is to look at outside evidence. When we do this with Mormonism, the prognosis is not good.

Proof, not feelings

Be prepared to present the evidence for your position. For example, you can say to Mormon missionaries, "We both are confident and assured that we are correct in our own beliefs. Since our beliefs differ — and they do, or you would not be here today — one of us is wrong. How will we know which one? Only by looking at the evidence outside of ourselves. When we do, we observe that the Bible is reliable and has been accurately preserved. This verifies my position, because I accept the Bible.

"When we look Mormonism independently we observe that there is no confirmation of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon from archaeology or history. In fact, the lack of archaeological evidence that ought to be there is hurtful to Mormonism.

Joseph Finally, since Smith's translation of the Book of Abraham has been shown to be fraudulent, his ability to translate the Book of Mormon accurately is also in serious question. Since we both have inward feelings that our own view is true, the outside evidence makes my position much more likely than yours.

Sincere, but wrong.

When Mormons sense they are losing a lot of ground during the conversation, they may bring up universalism, the belief that every sincere person will make it to heaven, regardless of their beliefs. This is in accordance with Mormon doctrine. However, it is not compatible with biblical doctrine. Several verses in the Bible indicate that Jesus is the only way to obtain eternal life (Jn. 3:36, 14:6; Acts 4:12; Heb. 10:26-31).

There are three types of faith:
Faith with evidence. This

is reasonable faith (e.g., many events in the Bible including Jesus' Resurrection).

 Faith with no evidence, for or against. This is blind faith (e.g., the Exodus from Egypt).

Faith in spite of evidence against it. This is stubborn faith (e.g., archaeological problems with the Book of Mormon and the translation problem with the Book of Abraham).

The type of faith Mormons exhibit is the third type and is not the way God works as modeled throughout the Bible. Unless there is a better foundation than feelings for your faith in a system that you hope will allow you to have eternal life, it may be time to start looking around at alternatives.

Licona is director of apologetics and interfaith evangelism at the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention in Alpharetta, Ga. This article has been edited for length. For full article with end notes and references, visit http://www.sbcbaptistpress.org/bpn ews.asp?id=27028. Licona's analysis appears courtesy of Baptist Press. Read additional free articles on Mormonism and related topics at www.4truth.net.

Study: Unchurched 'turned off,' but open to Jesus

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) - A majority of unchurched Americans are turned off by the institutional church and don't have a biblical understanding about God and Jesus, yet they believe Jesus makes a positive difference in a person's life and would enjoy an honest discussion with a friend about spiritual

Those are just a few of the findings from a new study of unchurched Americans conducted by LifeWay Research in partnership with the North American Mission Board (NAMB) Center for Missional Research. LifeWay Research, the research

arm of LifeWay Christian Resources, and NAMB are entities of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The results of the study, which polled 1,402 adults who had not attended a religious service at a church, synagogue or mosque in the previous six months, are available at LifeWayResearch.com.

The findings have important implications for Christian churches and individuals who want to reach

unchurched people with the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ, LifeWay Research director Ed Stetzer said.

"A full 72% of the people interviewed said they think the church 'is full of hypocrites," Stetzer said. "At the same time, however, 71% of the respondents said they believe Jesus 'makes a positive difference in a person's life' and 78% said they would be 'willing to listen' to someone who wanted to share what they believed about

Concerning the biblical understanding about God and Jesus among unchurched Americans, Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research, recounted, "While 72% of those surveyed said they believe God - a higher or supreme being - actually exists, only 48% agree there is only one God as described in the Bible, and 61% believe 'the God of the Bible is no different from the gods or spiritual beings depicted by world religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.' At the same time, 66% of adults ages 18-29 agree that Jesus died and came back to life, compared to 54% of adults 30 years and older.

It's not surprising that people who don't attend church don't understand what the Bible teaches, McConnell observed.

"If you aren't going to church, you don't have an opportunity to be informed about what the Bible teaches or what other faiths teach," he said. "It's not surprising, then, that unchurched people lump world religions all together and consider the gods described in them as being the same."

Stetzer said the problem is compounded by a widespread notion of religious tolerance that says religious

and spiritual truth is a matter of personal opinion.

"We found a real openness to hearing about matters of faith, but the study also clearly documents what I call the Oprah-ization of American Christianity,"
Stetzer said. "It's very much a generic big guy in the
sky' view of God and a 'you believe what you believe,
Tbelieve what I believe' viewpoint on theology. People

say, 'Who am I to judge?'
"We have seen this in the current political cam-

paigns, in regard to Mormonism," Stetzer said. "Recently a Christian leader was asked whether Mormons are Christians, and he replied that no, Mormons are outside the standard definition of what an orthodox Christian is. The host was shocked somebody would say that. How dare we say someone else is or is not a Christian?

"Christians begin with a faith system that teaches who God is, but the people in our culture not only don't believe that, but often consider us intolerant because we dare to believe it," Stetzer said.

The negative perception for many people, however, seems to be the church, not Jesus, according to

While 64% of the respondents think "the Christian religion is a relevant and viable religion for today," 79% think Christianity "is more about organized religion than about loving God and loving people." Seventy-two percent said they think

the church "is full of hypocrites, people who criticize others for doing the same things they do themselves," and 86% believe they "can have a good relationship with God without being involved in church.

The belief that church attendance isn't necessary for spiritual well-being is just as common among adults who grew up in church as it is among those who attended church less often as children, McConnell said

Unchurched people do not understand the connection between having a relationship with God and being with other believers in church," he said. "In the Christian faith, these are inseparable. Jesus' last prayer before being arrested, as recorded in John 17, was that everyone who believes in Him would be unified and work together to let the world know that God loves them and sent Jesus.

People on the outside see the church as candles, pews and flowers, rather than people living out their love for God by loving others," McConnell added. "Such skepticism can only be overcome by churches and believers who demonstrate the unity and love for

which Jesus prayed."
Stetzer noted, "There will always be the stumbling block of the cross. Yet our study shows that many are tripping over the church before they hear the message of the cross."

Despite their negative opinions about the institutional church, most unchurched people are open to discussing spiritual matters with a friend. The research showed that:

78% of those surveyed said they would be willing to listen to someone talk about their Christian beliefs.

The number rose to 89% among adults 18-29 years of age.
• Only 28% of adults 30 years and older said they think Christians they know talk to them too much about their

beliefs. 78% of adults 30 years and older said they would enjoy an honest conversation with a friend about religious and spiritual beliefs, even if they disagreed

with the friend. "Even though the unchurched have a confused view of God and a negative view of the church, they are overwhelmingly open to someone sharing about their Christian faith," Stetzer said. "We think religion is a topic that is

Why Church?

A national survey of 1,402 adults ages 18 and older who have not attended a religious service, synagogue, or mosque, at any time in the past six months.

I believe I can have a good relationship with God without being involved in church

86% agree

The church is full of hypocrites, people who criticize others for doing the same things they do themselves

72% agree

Believing in Jesus makes a positive difference in a person's life

71% agree

rs represent percentage who "somewhat agree" and "strongly agree" with statement.





off-limits in polite conversation, but unchurched people say they would enjoy conversations about spiritual matters.

Stetzer added, "Increasingly, the God Americans believe in looks less like the God described in the Bible. They are a long way from where people were 100 years ago, when there was more of a consensus about who God is. That is a rebuke to us as Christians and, at the same time, a challenge. What is it about the faith we live that causes our culture to like Jesus but reject the church?"

One of the most important insights of the study is that the vast majority of unchurched people are not only open to spiritual conversations but already know someone who is a Christian, McConnell said.

"Eighty-nine percent of these unchurched people say they have close friends who are Christians," he said. "We don't have to search for the unchurched folks around us; we actually know them. It's really a matter of starting conversations about spiritual matters with the unchurched people we know.

"Although we may not have the home field advantage we once did, people are open to spiritual conversations, open to hearing about a genuine faith, and God is still at work, using people and churches to share the Good News in an increasingly confused world," McConnell said. "That should propel us to action and help us move beyond fear to share our faith."

Editor's note: For more details about the survey, visit LifeWayResearch.com. In addition, Stetzer is commenting on the study on his blog at EdStetzer.com. Stetzer and McConnell also discussed the research on an Inside LifeWay podcast, the official news podcast of LifeWay Christian Resources.

Who is God?

A national survey of 1,402 adults ages 18 and older who have not attended a religious service, synagogue, or mosque, at any time in the past six months.

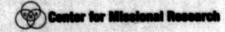
God, a higher or supreme being, actually exists

There exists only one God, the God described in the Bible

48% agree

The God of the Bible is no different from gods or spiritual beings depicted by world religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.

61% agree





Who are Christians?

A national survey of 1,402 adults ages 18 and older who have not attended a religious service, synagogue, or mosque, at any time in the past six months.

I think Christianity today is more about organized religion than about loving God and loving people

79% agree

I have at least one close friend who considers himself or herself a Christian

89% agree

If somebody wanted to tell me what she or he believed about Christianity, I would be willing to listen

78% agree





BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Breakthrough in Justice

Psalm 7:1-17

By Andy Vaughn

I had the opportunity to serve in Siberia as a summer missionary while I was a student at Southwestern Baptist Seminary. While in Siberia my eyes were dazzled at the sight of pristine rivers that flowed through the undisturbed mountain valleys beneath the Russian sunsets. My heart raced up the steep, mountainous landscape while hiking along a muddy trail covered in massive bear tracks. In all of its splendor and beauty, the magnificant landscape of Footon nificent landscape of Eastern Siberia made an impression on my life that I will never forget.

As unforgettable as the Russian landscape is in all of its beauty, I was even more impressed with the children I met in Russia. Large numbers

of children live in orphanages that dot the countryside of post Communist Russia.

Many of the orphanages are overcrowded with children that come from homes that did not want them or from parents that just could not afford to keep their child. Other children have lost their parents due to war, sickness, or addictions such as drugs and alcohol. It seems unfair that these children have to live and experience child-hood in a situation that is far less than ideal.

People are often faced with the question, "Why does life seem so unfair and where is justice in the world?" Psalm 7:1-17 describes a time in David's life where he sought after the justice of God and the difference that made in his life.

Let's take a look at God's word together as it teaches us how to handle the injustices of

Vaughn

the world we live in.
Psalm 7:1-2 (NASB)
says, "O Lord my God,
in Thee I have taken refuge; save me from all those who pursue me, and deliver me, lest he tear my soul like

a lion, dragging me away, while there is none to deliver." When David was surrounded by the threats of those that pursued him, he sought refuge in the Lord. David knew that no other could provide deliverance in his life like God could. People trust those they run to for help!

Today, you may be struggling with the memories of childhood abuse or a broken marriage that just does not seem fair. You may have lost your job due to circumstances out of your control. Keep in mind that no matter what injustices you face, you can take refuge in God and He will be faithful to deliver you.

God's deliverance from injustice comes to those that

walk in innocence. Psalm 7:5 (NASB) says, "Let the enemy pursue my soul and overtake it; and let him trample my life down to the ground, and lay my glory in the dust." David is willing to accept whatever he deserves. David declares in verses three and four that if the verses three and four that if the injustice rests in his hands and he is the cause, he will pay the penalty from his pursuers. David knew full well that he was not the guilty party of the injustices he faced.

Maintaining a life of inno-cence in the face of injustice is possible through Christ. Christ was beaten and killed, yet He was completely innocent of the charges brought before Him. Today, Scripture teaches us to live a life that is free from any charges of guilt that could be brought against us. Our view of God's justice will be much clearer as long as we strive to maintain our innocence in view of those that

attempt to treat us unfairly. Psalm 7:8 (NASB) says, "The Lord judges the peoples; vindicate me, o Lord, according to my righteousness and my integrity that is in me." David sought the justice of God against his adversaries. People are often tempted to take mat-ters into their own hands when it comes to delivering justice. The best justice to be served is that that is based on the Lord and not on our own making. David's righteousness and integrity were not of himself, but were a result of God's work in his life. He knew that God alone would be the One to trust for delivering the proper justice. Psalm 7:17 (NASB) states, "I

will give thanks to the Lord according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of the Lord Most High." God's righteousness sets Him apart as the One to be trusted especially in times when justice needs to be served.

As you see and experience firsthand the unfairness of the world around you, be encouraged to trust God as the righteous judge that will deliver His justice.

Vaughn is pastor of First Church, Fulton.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

God Wants Us To Value Everyone

Gn. 1:27, 9:6; Mt. 5: 21-22, 22:36-40; Mk. 10: 46-52

By Melleen Moore

A small children's book entitled, How Much Do You Love Me?, was a favorite of my children. Each time we read the book, they would stretch their tiny arms as wide as possible to demonstrate their love copying the examples in the book. What can melt the heart of a parent more than those tiny arms stretched wide and hearing the words, "I love you this much." Jesus stretched His arms

open wide on the cross of Calvary, giving His life to demonstrate His love. What better way to show the value of life than with love? God's gift to man — His only Son, showed genuine love and value of humanity from God's heart.

Honor Everyone Gn. 1:27; 9:6

Man being created by God in His own image signifies the honor God placed on human-ity. The very thought that God wanted man to be like Him is awesome. "In His image" suggests looks, character, values, behavior, desires, goals, and yes, love. Having been created in the image of God Himself raises man's value to immeasurable; God's creation is priceless. God is the source of life, giver of life, the very breath of life. He gave man a personality which includes mind, emotion, and will, as well as a spiritual nature. This enables man to know God, commune with God and have a relationship with Him. What an honor!



Moore

Respect Everyone Mt. 5:21-22

Jesus begins these with the thought of what had been heard concerning the commandment not to kill. He is explaining the greater meaning of this sixth commandment as part

of the Sermon on the Mount. God's law is to protect human life from violence, death, and even abortion. Jesus noted that anger and name-calling also break this commandment. Anger "without cause shall be in danger of judgment" (Mt. 5:22 KJV). Two examples of name-calling are mentioned: "Raca," and "fool," with a variety of meanings which damage a person's spirit and leave a feeling of worthlessness. The judg-ment for violation of these commandments begins in the lower court, moving to the higher court (Sanhedrin), and on to hell fire which is the eternal judgment.

Love Everyone Mt. 22:36-40

This is Jesus' last week of public ministry. The Pharisees and Sadducees continue to question Jesus, hoping to ensnarl him with a question of religious law and cause Him to give an unpopular answer. He is teaching in the temple when asked to identify the Great Commandment — one that should be kept above all others. Jesus answered to love God with all our being, heart, soul, and mind. Continuing His answer, Jesus said to love your neighbor as yourself. The answer was simple: love God first and everyone else secondly. To show just how important these commandments were, Jesus stated, "on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Mt. 22:40 KJV).

Value Everyone Mk. 10:46-52

The story of Bartimaeus is a beautiful example of love in

action. Bartimaeus, the blind man, called louder and louder as he heard Jesus was coming. Even though being warned to be quiet, Bartimaeus begged for mercy. Jesus heard him and answered with the gift of sight. He valued the blind man and recognized his faith: "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole" (Mk. 10:52 KJV). Bartimaeus, having received his sight, followed Jesus in gratitude and love. Jesus sees our heart, not our imperfect bodies and sinful nature.

In observation of Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, let us envision the outstretched arms of Jesus embracing us personally as individuals and collectively as His children. We reap the blessings of being loved by God and having the opportunity to serve Him. To be like Jesus — "in His image" — calls for honor, respect, love, and value of everyone.

Moore is a member of Macedonia Church, Petal.

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Military family feels stresses, appreciates support

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP) — Millions of stars twinkle overhead in the black night sky off the bridge of the USS Philippine Sea, reminding Commander Rich McDaniel how insignificant he is in relationship to the great God he serves.

There are six other stars in McDaniel's life, however,

and they perhaps shine brightest of all. His wife Angie and their five children, ranging from five-year-old fraternal twins to his 12-year-old namesake, are often on his mind even when his ship sails in ports far away from its Jacksonville berth at Naval Station Mayport.

Together and yet so often apart, the McDaniels believe their family unit has been called to a peculiar mission in life — as missionaries to the Navy commu-

nity, serving God and country in peacetime and war.

"This is what He's called us to do. This is what our mission in life is," Angie McDaniel told the Florida Baptist Witness newspaper. "We really believe in the values of our country and that they're worth fighting for."

Angie said she made the choice 16 years ago to live the life of a military wife when they were both 21 and decided to marry during their senior year of college at the University of Memphis. Now she

homeschools all five children.
"I really didn't know what that was about, but I had a vision for that," she said of her husband's calling to the military. "We both saw ourselves as doing this together."

Since McDaniel was commissioned as a Navy officer after four years in ROTC, they have moved 12 times in 16 years — from Hawaii to Maine — and are on their third tour in Jacksonville since 2000. In that time, like most dads, McDaniel has spent

more time at work than at home. Unlike other dads, however, when he's at work, that can mean he's out to sea on a ship far from home for six, 12, or 18 months at a time, with shrinking time between deployments.

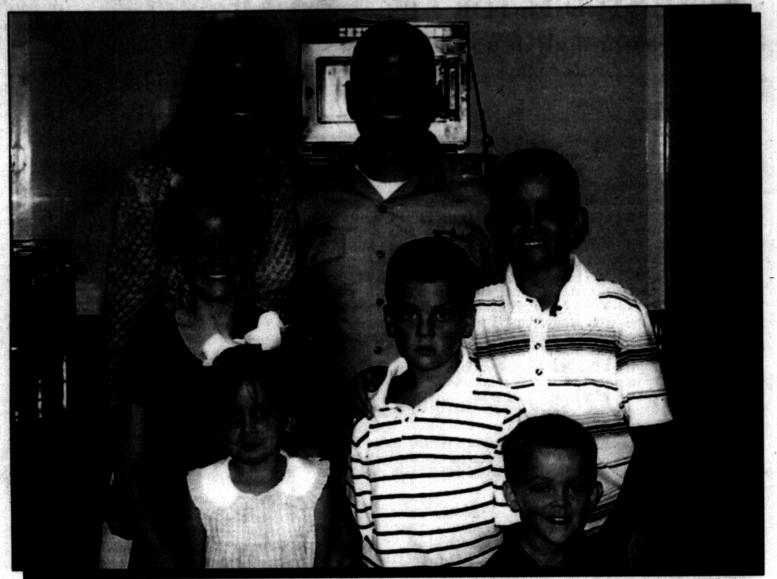
Propped up next to a bowl of fresh fruit in the kitchen, Angie's eyes dart to where Rich Jr., age 12, reads a book to five-year-old twins Emmie and Joey on the family room sofa. Doing math and language problems at the kitchen table are Seth, who is nearly eight years old, and Chelsea, age nine.

Angie, who completed her degree in elementary education at San Diego State University some time after they were married, doesn't miss a beat in run-

ning the household. What people sometimes see, however, can be mis-leading, Angie said. Ironically, it's in church of all places that Angie sometimes feels the most lonely and inadequate when faced with the task of raising five children nearly on her own.

"I can't tell you how hard it is sitting in church with all these husbands and wives together, you know, week after week and to be there, and to sit there, alone with your kids. It is really hard, and you just think, 'Lord, why are we doing this? You know, I don't like this," Angie said.

When he was a youngster McDaniel attended Memphis-area Bellevue Church in Cordova, Tn., Angie said, and the couple attended there in 1997-99 but more recently visited First Church in Jacksonville, Fla., at a friend's invitation, after having attended evangelical Christian churches wherever they have lived throughout the years.



MCDANIEL CLAN — U.S. Navy Commander Rich McDaniel (back row, right), executive officer of the USS Philippine Sea whose home port is at Mayport Naval Station in Jacksonville, Fla., is joined by his wife Angie and their five children. (BP photo by Joni B. Hannigan/Florida Baptist Witness)

"It was like a breath of fresh air when we walked in," Angie said of their first visit in July. Before that, she said, "We have felt really alone and without support."

Angie said even Rich Jr. commented on everyone's friendliness without being prompted and the children were immediately involved in programs at the church "where other people that love the Lord are pouring Scripture into them and really showing that they care.

Since that time, Angie and the children have attended on Sundays and Wednesdays, and she reluctantly joined the church in August. She was reluctant only because she said it felt weird to join without her husband, whose schedule is sometimes unknown. McDaniel later told the Witness he will join First

Church, Jacksonville, at his first opportunity.

Angie said the 20,000-member Jacksonville church has been an example of how to reach out to a family and hold on when times get tough.

"I didn't realize before what I really needed," she said, "but I needed that spiritual guarant for my kide somebody to

itual support for my kids, somebody to come alongside of me. Even though my husband loves the Lord — and when he is home he is actively involved in leading the family spiritually — he is gone so much the burden of that really falls on me."

The energetic mom who rises at five a.m. to spend an hour in quiet time and devotions and another hour exercising, said she joined a women's mentoring group and takes the children to church for

choir as well as Sunday morning and evening Bible study and worship.

"It has helped to give me perspective as I go through the struggles of a military wife," she said of her involvement at church, adding that when her husband is away she's vulnerable emotionally and can experience some ups and downs.

"In a short period of time the kids have plugged in; I have plugged in," Angie said. Tears moistening her clear eyes, Angie said the response to her family has been heartwarming with women from the

Sunday School class showing up at her door with home-cooked meals and people calling and dropping by to visit and encourage her.

The practical way members of the church have reached out to her family, Angie said, is a good example of how churches can minister to military families. 'It has just made a huge difference in our lives,'

As she watched the animated kids pop corn in the microwave for a mid-morning snack, Angie admitted it can be tough to homeschool but said it's something she thought about after debating the topic in a college class. She chose to pursue it after she and her husband discussed their desire for high academic standards and other values for their family.

Eyeballing the children who had all settled down to quietly munch food at the table with pencils in hand, she whispered: "It's a rare moment."

The work doesn't stop with being wife and mother. Angie takes seriously the responsibility to assist her husband in reaching out to military families. In many places she has befriended Navy wives and held neighborhood Bible studies.

"The Lord brings families our way, and my husband has opportunities to counsel people," she said. "I think the vision that God gave us back in college — we saw ourselves eventually in this place.

"These people need the Lord, and they need to see what a godly family looks like," Angie said. "He has blessed us beyond what we could ever deserve and could ever earn."

Angie was somewhat hesitant to pinpoint when her husband is in the country and when he's out because ships' movements are matters of national security in times of war — and the second in command of a ship that is part of a battle group that serves in a war zone is more often out to sea than not.

In a telephone interview, McDaniel told the Withess he is proud of the sacrifice his wife has made to support him and to homeschool the children. McDaniel said the schooling situation is fluid and the family reevaluates often based on the children's needs and what is available in the private and public sector wherever they are stationed. They move about every 18 months, he said, so finding schools — and a church — can take time.

Books for soldiers, families

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP) — The following is a list of books that could be helpful to soldiers and their families during a time of war:

Medals Above My Heart: The Rewards of Being a Military Wife, by Carol McGlothlin and Brenda C. Pace, is a devotional for military wives published by B&H Publishing Group
 Hope for the Home Front: Winning the Emotional and Spiritual Battles of a Military Wife, by Marshele Carter Waddell explores the emotional and spiritual battlegrounds common for today's military wife.
 God Answers Prayers Military Edition: True Stories from People Who Serve and Those Who Love Them, by Allison Bottke features accounts from past and present servicemen and women and family members who tell how God answered their prayers.

their prayers.

• Soldier Looks at Spiritual Warfare, by Dick Denny uses real-life military analogies to confront readers with the reality of spiritual warfare and shows them how to grow spiritually. Each of the 12 chapters starts with a "you-are-there" narrative-style war flashback, which relates to the subject of that chapter.